

John Blair to George Washington, May 11, 1758, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM PRESIDENT BLAIR

WMS.BURGH May 11th. 1758

SIR,—I have just received a Letter from the Honble. Wm Nelson, Esqre., in favour of Lieut. Baker now here with yor. permission. His friends have prompted him to think of filling the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Captn. Joshua Lewis, and have strongly solicited Mr. Nelson to intercede with me for that promotion, in consideration of his bold and gallant behaviour in his Excursion toward Fort Du Quesne. His Honor was afraid lest it might be thought unjust to the Senior Lieutenant, who seemed to have a Right to a Preference. They replied that when a junior officer had signalized himself by his remarkable good behavior on any particular occasion, as Mr. Baker had, it was not unjust nor unusual to promote such an one, as it would inspire others to emulation; and that Rewards to merit are the best means to make good officers, rather than to adhere invariably to seniority. Upon the Whole His Honr. was so convinced of Mr. Bakers merit that he strongly recommended him to me, if it could be done without prejudice to the service & that it would be very obliging to him. I have had other solicitations to the same purpose, but I need not mention them after Mr. Nelsons, whom I would fain oblige; only Col. Robt. Burwell urges the Governor's promise to promote him for his gallant conduct on that occasion. I told Colo. Burwell I was convinced of his merit & would gladly oblige; but that I had at yr. request sent you up 6 blank Commissns abt. 10 Days ago. If that is yet blank I desire it may remain so, till I hear from you. I wish you had mentioned Mr. Baker's

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courage & conduct on that occasion, at the same time with Lt. Bullits Seniority, that it might have been considered here.¹

I am Sir your very hble Servt JOHN BLAIR

At least I hope Mr. Baker may fill Col. Mercer's Post in your Regiment for this Campaign.

¹ Washington replied as follows: "It will cause great dissatisfaction in the regiment if Lieutenant Baker is put over the heads of older officers. It is granted that Mr. Baker is a very deserving officer, but there are others equally deserving and have adventured equally to seek glory, and to merit applause. Ensign Chew, for instance, was with him when the scalps were taken; Capt. McKenzie, Lt. Gist, Mr. Woodward and many others have adventured as far into the enemy's country, tho' with less success. I therefore hope (to prevent the disorders consequent upon his advancement) that your Honor will suffer Colo. Mercer's company to be given to Mr. Stewart, the oldest Lieutenant, as Captn. Lewis was in the like case to Mr. Bullitt."